

The Lapeer County HISTORIAN



A PUBLICATION OF THE LAPEER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

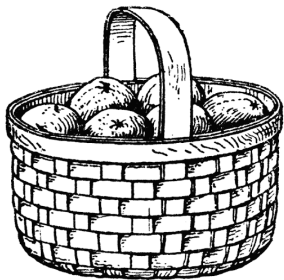
SEPTEMBER 2021

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

If you're interested in volunteering at the museum, please stop by or call on Wednesdays or Saturdays. We generally schedule two docents on each day, from 10am to 12:30pm, and then from 12:30pm to 3pm. Training is provided.

810/245-5808

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ANNUAL JOINT MEETING

The Lapeer County Genealogy Society will host our annual joint meeting this year, in the Lincoln Room at the Lapeer Center.

425 County Center Dr., Lapeer

October 12, 2021

7pm Program

"Centennial Farms of Lapeer County"

There will be light refreshments and drinks. There is no charge for the event, but you can make a contribution there if you'd like to support the work of the LCGS.



"Do you like my hat?"

Go, Dog. Go! PD. Eastman

NEW IN THE MUSEUM

Curated for our reopening, we have four fresh new exhibits. One case is an array of paintings and metal work of local artists. On the topic of business and technology, we have added various office tools and equipment to complement the switchboard we keep on permanent display.

As a significant community in a rural county, Lapeer provided some centralized services including government offices, rail access, medical care, and retail shops. Plucked from our glass collection, we have a selection of apothecary bottles that would have been seen in a pharmacy, a doctor's office, or a homeopath's living room where dubious treatments and cures were dispensed. The case also holds related paraphernalia, and vintage photographs.

The fourth new exhibit curated for this season presents the work of milliners and hatters. Men's hats, women's hats, tall hats, small hats. Catherine Fox created unique fixtures to display each piece. Sharon Gorsline from the Genealogy Society has generously loaned us a few hats, and also a book on hats throughout history.

SOCIETY BUSINESS: PROJECTS

A few different projects are underway at the LCHS. We've met with contractors about expanding the gallery back to the north wall, and updating the lighting in that area. Although the carpet looks like it's in good shape, it smells musty. Lots of things in museums smell, but the air shouldn't be one of them. Keeping the humidity at appropriate levels is an ongoing struggle. Our intent is to have the carpet replaced with hard floors that can be cleaned with a dust mop, and will be impervious to humidity and smells.

Structurally, we need to repair the brick steps at the front door. They are still functional, but deteriorating. We also need maintenance on the eaves and the overhang at the front door.

We are continuously investigating grant opportunities to help fund some of these projects.



Collectors' Ornaments available at the gift shop including:

- Library
- High School
- Oakdale Castle
- PIX 80th
- Courthouse #2

BECOMING LAPEER

You don't become a bustling center of commerce like Lapeer overnight. First, Christopher Columbus discovered the Bahamas.

A while later, Jamestown was settled, the Pilgrims showed up at Plymouth Rock, the Puritans arrived at the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and in 1657 the Quakers held their first meeting in America.

TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

As years passed, colonists began to resent Parliament and the Crown. They were British citizens subject to their control, yet had no representative to speak on their behalf.

In 1764, Parliament passed the Revenue Act (Sugar Act) which replaced the 1733 Sugar and Molasses Act. Molasses was essential to the distilling of rum which was apparently essential to the colonists. Rather than paying 6 pence (6p) tax on every gallon of molasses imported into the colonies, merchants would pay only 3p. That would seem like a really good deal if they had been paying the 6p in the first place, but the bribe to smuggle in the molasses was only 1.5p. The Act taxed other imports too: indigo; linen, silk, and calico fabrics; Portuguese and Spanish (not French) wine; coffee; pimento and herbs.

Reading the Constitution of the United States, you might have wondered about the 3rd Amendment — why it was so important to include an act in the Bill of Rights banning forced quartering of troops. Well, in 1765, the British Parliament passed the Quartering Act, which required the colonies to provide food and shelter for the British Army. Many of the colonists believed they didn't even need a standing army since the French and Indian War had ended, so the further obligation was met with hostility.

THE TOWNSHEND ACTS

Parliament brought down the hammer on the colonies in 1767 with the Townshend Acts. The first, manipulated New York into compliance with the Quartering Act by muzzling their Assembly unless they did. Another was a bailout for the

British East India Company reducing their tax burden so they could undercut the tea smuggled in by the Dutch. The Commissioner of Customs Act created the Customs Boards to enforce shipping regulations and crack down on the rampant smuggling into the colonies.

The act that was virtually designed to anger the colonists was the Revenue Act of 1767. When Ben Franklin heard it was in the works, he let it be known that the colonists would begin manufacturing their own goods and avoid the duties all together. The clever Charles Townshend, Chancellor of the Exchequer, then chose specific commodities and goods that he thought would be difficult for the colonies to produce: lead, glass, paint, paper, and of course tea.

Every duty except that on tea was repealed in April 1770.

Following the passage of the Townshend Acts, British troops arrived in Boston to enforce those duties. They were not welcomed. From the National Parks Service: “One clash between soldiers and a mob in March 1770 will leave five dead. Radicals will call it “the Boston Massacre,” while the British will call it “the incident on King Street.” Point of view matters.

THUS, REVOLUTION.

In 1775, in response to the British assaults at Lexington and Concord, thousands of volunteers from across the colonies converged on Massachusetts forming the Continental Army. The war went on until 1781 when General Cornwallis was forced to surrender at Yorktown. In 1783, the peace treaty was signed in Paris making the thirteen colonies officially independent, and Canada, a lone British province in North America.

Once the colonies gained independence, they were no longer bound by the royal proclamation that created the Indian reserve in the Ohio River Valley. In characteristic pioneering tradition, the settlers pushed west from the Appalachians, forcing Indians from their native lands.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

As often happens with war, the participants accumulated massive debt. The United States

needed to raise money. In 1785, they passed the Land Ordinance Act, which created the Public Land Survey System (PLSS). If you’ve ever purchased land in Michigan, you’ve probably encountered the PLSS, the system that created our survey township grid. If you enjoyed story problems in fifth grade, you’ll love the PLSS.

ON THE GRID

When surveyors arrived in Michigan, their first task was to identify an east/west baseline, and north/south meridian. The Michigan survey was started in September 1815 by Benjamin Hough. The western border of the Treaty of Detroit, a line reaching north from Fort Defiance in Ohio, would be continued all the way to Sault Ste. Marie to stand as Michigan’s meridian.

The baseline now marks the northern borders of Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Calhoun, Jackson, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties.

Every congressional township in Michigan was measured from these intersections. That’s intersections — plural. Due to one incompetent contractor, Michigan has two, creating a jog.



Meridian-Baseline State Park was established to preserve the site. In 2014 the DNR purchased property to build a parking area, and to allow visitors access to the landlocked park. The trail is 1.4 miles round trip, described by visitors as a nice, clean trail, and an easy hike. Dogs are permitted, but there are no facilities, so you’ll have to hike out with your trash. It’s a heavily wooded, partial wetland, so mosquitos will be a consideration in the peak of summer.

MARSHY, SWAMPY, WETLANDS, OH MY.

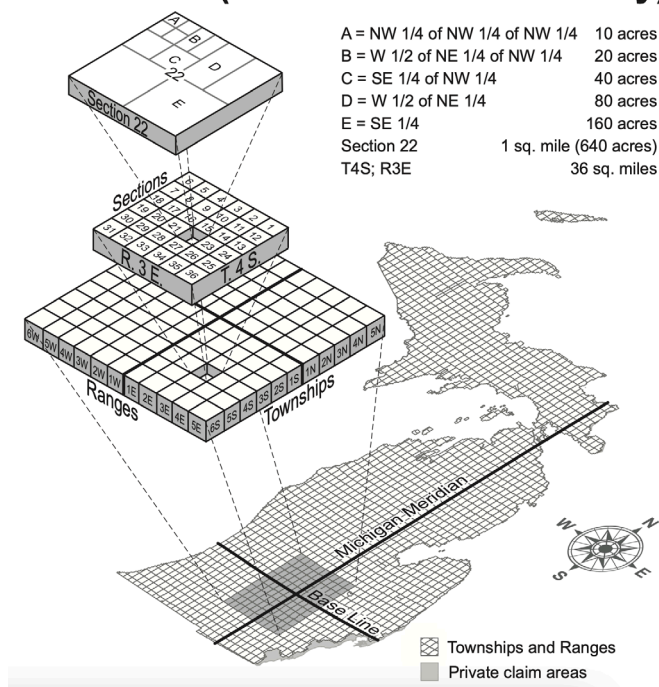
From 1775, the United States established bounty-lands west of the Appalachians for veterans. In 1812, two million acres of the Michigan Territory were designated as such.

News reports of Michigan were less than flattering. Measured at about 61.8 million acres,

an estimated 10 million of those were described as inhospitable wetlands. Benjamin Hough, an Ohio politician and Deputy Surveyor (DS) for the General Land Office (GLO), was contracted to begin the survey north from Fort Defiance, through the disputed territory of southern Michigan — northern Ohio, depending on your allegiance. Hough's father was a renowned surveyor of Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio. His grandfather was a wealthy land owner in Virginia, who earned his living as a surveyor, and as a quit-rent collector for Lord Thomas Fairfax.

Alexander Holmes, DS, was contracted to survey the Michigan baseline. His first attempts were hampered by hostile Indians who believed the Treaty of Detroit was not being honored. They recognized landmarks, not latitude and longitude. Hough was met with similar resistance. Both teams were forced to withdraw.

Township and Range System (U.S. Public Land Survey)



<https://geo.msu.edu>

When they began again, Hough and Holmes set off together from Fort Defiance. Once into the proposed bounty-lands, they worked their way around the Grand River, and were finally able to establish the initial point of the township grid.

Hough wrote to Edward Tiffin, Surveyor General, that despite miserable conditions, they

were all blessed with good health. Holmes ended on a similarly odd, upbeat note writing, "We have suffered almost every hardship, and encountered almost every difficulty that could be expected of mortals to endure, but amidst all have been blessed with good health."

That notwithstanding, 39 miles east of the meridian Holmes quit. By October Hough was out of the field due to illness, writing that they would not return to the field, "until the country shall be sufficiently frozen so as to bear man and beast." For whatever reason, Michigan was reported as virtually useless for farming — perhaps because every season frustrated the surveyors. In the warmer months, foliage obstructed sight lines, they sunk into marshes and swamps, and the black flies and mosquitos were legion. They knew the winter months would freeze the surface and ease their passage across the wetlands, but then the high snow would be a hindrance.

Tiffin believed their reports that the land was mostly morass, unfit for farming. He implored the Commissioner of the GLO to bring the reports to President Madison and the Congress. The response from Washington, was to repeal a section of the 1812 act that had designated Michigan for military bounty-lands. Congress then allocated lands further west, in Illinois and Missouri for the veterans. They wrote, "So that the brave men who had periled their lives for their country should not be wronged and insulted by the donation of lands of which, according to the surveyors' reports, not one acre in a hundred was fit for cultivation."

DEBT

The US Treasury was still in need of revenue, and others were willing to pay for the land. The Michigan survey resumed in July 1816 with a different crew, led by Joseph Fletcher. His work was so inaccurate however, it was wholly rejected and had to be done again.

To make the Michigan Territory more attractive to settlers, Governor Cass had a road constructed from Detroit to Chicago. By opening up the interior, travelers could see that the bad reputation Michigan had was unfounded. The project made trade more profitable, and settlers more enthusiastic to take a risk on Michigan. in

1818, surveyed land began to hit the market, and people began to populate the southern counties.

Years after the Fletcher debacle, the surveyor Joseph Wampler was sent to continue the mission. Wampler found Hough and Holmes' original marker for the meridian and baseline. Fletcher's work did not line up. Wampler determined that development had proceeded to the point that correcting Fletcher's mistakes was not feasible. He chose instead to establish a westbound baseline 935 feet south of the original eastbound line.

SO, LAPEER.

In 1822, Governor Cass laid out the boundaries of ten new counties, of which Lapeer was one. The task of surveying those in the Thumb was contracted to Wampler. He completed 24 townships, but gave up before he reached the top of township 10 north – now marked by Marlette Road. Strangely, it seems like surveyors of the time were not necessarily suited for the hardships of plotting out the wilderness.

Although Lapeer had been set out in 1822, its only inhabitants were Indians, and it was attached to Oakland County for all matters. One thing that increased the flow of settlers from New York and New England into Michigan was the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825.

By 1830, the city of Lapeer began to develop near the fork of Farmers' Creek and the Flint River. Governor Cass sent a team to mark it as the county seat, not realizing the speculation shenanigans he set in motion.

The party traveled from Pontiac, and camped about 12 miles south of Lapeer. The next day, they reached the settlement and established

the county seat. They traveled back to their camp to rest for the night. When they woke the next morning, their guide, Josiah Terry was missing.

Terry, now with the specific legal description of the county seat, hurried to report to his employer, Judge Daniel Leroy of Pontiac. Leroy then quickly purchased the land from the United States setting himself up for a tidy profit. You can find a detailed narrative in Russ Franzen's Squabble City, available at the museum.

In 1834, a survey team finally returned to complete the northern townships of Lapeer County. Heading out in January, through 18" of snow, they failed to reach camp, and had to endure their first night in the woods with no provisions. After a few weeks' work, they gave up. They began again six weeks later, but even in March, the horses couldn't negotiate the "spongy" terrain, so were retired leaving only packmen to support the expedition. They paused again before the summer, resuming in the fall, and finally completing the survey in February, 1835. Thus, Lapeer.

January 8, 1835
US national debt is \$0 for the first and only time in history

January 20, 1835, Lapeer County was organized by an act of the Michigan legislative council. The action made the county functional and independent, leaving behind all old matters of the court for Oakland County to resolve.

So you don't just become Lapeer overnight. First... Columbus landed in Bermuda.



MID-19TH CENTURY SURVEYOR'S CIRCUMFERENTOR, STAFF, AND MEASURING CHAIN



Lapeer County Historical Society • Lapeer, Michigan

P.O. Box 72

Lapeer, MI 48446

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Museum is open!
Wed & Sat 10a.m to 3p.m.
Come on in and bring a friend.

Join or Renew Membership

(check your address label for current status)

1 YEAR	2 YEARS	LIFE MEMBER
\$15 Individuals	\$25 Individuals	\$150 Individuals
\$20 Couples	\$35 Couples	\$175 Couples

Life Memberships are deposited into our endowment fund with the Community Foundation to perpetuate the work of the Society.

Membership \$ _____

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\$ _____

Total \$ _____

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LCHS

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Lapeer 48446

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MUSEUM GIFT SHOP

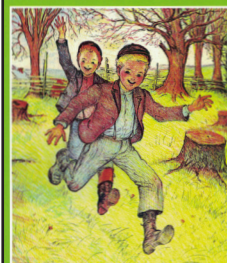
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Marguerite de Angeli



COPPER-TOED BOOTS

BY LAPEER AUTHOR

MARGUERITE DEANGELI

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